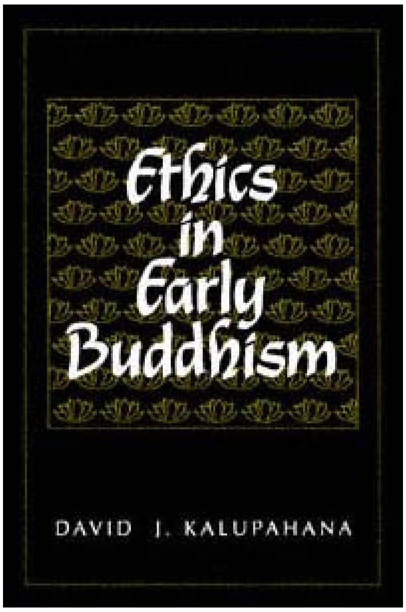


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PREFACE

THE PRESENT volume is devoted to an analysis of the materials available primarily in the early discourses *(sutta)* and to some extent in the books on discipline *(vinaya)*. Part one is devoted to a survey of the pre-Buddhist background as well as some of the problems relating to ethical theory. While the general understanding was that in this background the major moral theory was deontology, which culminated in the *Bhagavadgita* *, I have indicated that a strong utilitarian trend of thought was also present and that it was this utilitarianism that was utilized by Kautilya* in his *Arthasastra**. Since the *Bhagavadgita** and the *Arthasastra** were finalized during the same period (circa 400 B.C.), and since these two moral philosophies would have continued side by side with the moral philosophy presented by the Buddha, it was thought that tracing their development until the two traditions assumed final form would provide a better view of the Buddhist theory as well.

This account of historical background is followed by an analysis of problems that have haunted philosophers since critical thinking first appeared. Prominent among these is the problem relating to knowledge, which then spreads into other areas such as the distinctions between facts and values, the individual will and the world will, individual and society, and so on. A clarification of these issues, especially as they appear in the context of early Buddhism was considered to be relevant to an understanding of the moral philosophy of early Buddhism.

Part two deals with the moral life as expounded in the discourses. In a small monograph like the present it would be impossible to treat all the moral concepts discussed in the innumerable discourses. The strategy adopted here is to divide the path to moral perfection into three parts

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the beginning, the middle, and the conclusion, a division adopted by the Buddha himselfand analyze only the most important aspects listed under each of the parts. This, it is hoped, will provide a holistic view of the moral philosophy connecting its root to the fruit, the separation of which has led to much misunderstanding regarding the nature and status of the moral life. Since there is sufficient evidence that the Buddha began his career with a search for what is good *(kusala)* and that the moral principle was formulated after his attainment of moral perfection, a separate chapter on the nature and status of the principle follows the discussion of the moral life. The final chapter in part two deals with the prominence given to human life and the Buddha's justification of the moral life.

Part three deals with some applications of the moral principle in explaining some aspects of human life, such as the social organization, economics, politics, law and nature, or the environment. These have been selected because of their contemporary relevance. The order in which these topics are introduced is not significant. What is important is the understanding of the perspective from which the Buddha looked at these different aspects of human life.

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ABBREVIATIONS

(All references to Pali texts are from the editions of the Pali Text Society, London.)

A	*Anguttara-nikaya* *
D	*Digha-nikaya**
Dh	*Dhammapada*
HBP	*A History of Buddhist Philosophy*
It	*Itivuttaka*
M	*Majjhima-nikaya**
Pv	*Petavatthu*
S	*Samyutta-nikaya**
Sn	*Sutta-nipata**
Thag	*Theragatha**
Thig	*Therigatha**
Ud	*Udana**
Vin	*Vinaya Pitaka**

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